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NSC BRIEFING

30 October 1960

DATE: 1380 REVIEWER: EL SALVADOR  
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I. The coup on 26 October was prompted by growing popular pressure for social and economic reform and by concern on the part of the military over efforts by pro-Castro and Communist-infiltrated elements to exploit popular grievances.

A. The new 6-man junta, half military and half civilian, sought immediately to secure leftist backing and at least one leftist with past Communist associations was appointed to the new 9-man cabinet, apparently in a tactic to gain the broadest possible support.

2. Ousted President Lemus' (Lay-moose) recent decrees were cancelled, political prisoners released and exiles, some of them Communists, allowed to return.

3. A Communist-front political party is to be legalized. *a. on 27 Oct several Communist and pro-Communist labor & student leaders returned to San Salvador from exile in neighboring countries.*

B. However, the military <sup>has the funds</sup> retains the dominant role and is unlikely to permit a strong leftist voice.

1. Col. Alberto Escamilla (Es-cahm-ee-ya), heading the key interior ministry, is a reliable friend of the US and he privately states that the military will control the civilian component of the junta.

2. Escamilla is an old <sup>friend</sup> of ex-President Oscar Osorio (O-sore-ee-o) who probably will emerge as the real leader of the new regime.

1. Appointments to other key govt jobs on 28 Oct prompted US ambassador Kalijarvi to comment that these strengthen *US for left, pro Castro*

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3. Osorio, a military man himself, has strong army backing and is widely popular among the country's lower classes.

4. The US embassy believes Osorio favors more thorough reforms than he felt able to implement during his 1950-1956 term.

An Osorio-dominated government will probably be <sup>more</sup> ~~less~~ amenable to US <sup>views</sup> ~~influence~~ than Lemus was.

*Sympathetic*

C. The junta has announced that free elections will be held in 1962.

D. Pressure for economic and social reform is strong in El Salvador, where the gulf between the very wealthy few and the impoverished masses is perhaps greater than anywhere else in Latin America.

II. Although the junta appears to be in complete control of the government, we are getting reports that an anti-junta group within the military is planning a counter-coup, possibly in the next few days.

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there is widespread opinion in the country that no counter-coup will be attempted.

B. Whether or not a counter-coup is attempted, there seems to be sufficient disgruntlement to cause further unrest and instability.

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